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THE SITUATION IN BURUNDI

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-first year

Identical letters dated 12 December 1996 from the Permanent Representative of Burundi to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you a letter from the Burundian Government which summarizes the positions of opposition to the economic blockade against Burundi that have been adopted and officially recorded in the declarations issued by His Holiness Pope John-Paul II on 25 September 1996, by the World Food Summit, held from 13 to 17 November 1996 in Rome, by the summit meeting of heads of State and Government of the countries members of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, held in Brazzaville on 2 and 3 December 1996, and by the nineteenth summit meeting of the Heads of State of France and Africa, held in Ouagadougou from 4 to 6 December 1996.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have this letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 43, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Nsanze TERENCE
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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ANNEX

Identical letters dated 10 December 1996 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Burundi addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to inform you that the summit meeting of heads of State and Government of the countries members of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, held at Brazzaville on 2 and 3 December 1996, considered, inter alia, the situation in the Great Lakes region and, in particular, the situation in Burundi.

At the conclusion of the summit meeting, the heads of State and Government adopted the following position on Burundi:

"[We] note the efforts being made by Burundi and Rwanda to receive and reintegrate refugees in conditions of security and dignity, and encourage those countries to continue such efforts.

"[We] note the measures already taken by the Government of Burundi to restore the democratic process in that country, and take note of its commitment to expedite the creation of democratic institutions within a reasonable time-frame by giving priority to dialogue with the political class as a whole and all segments of Burundian society.

"[We] invite the States parties to the Arusha Accords to lift the embargo, which has a greater effect on the Burundian people, especially the most vulnerable social classes.

"[We] encourage therefore all parties in Burundi to choose a form of mediation which guarantees objectivity and neutrality in order to move ahead in the peace process, in the interests of the people of Burundi.

"The officers of the Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa will support such measures."

The nineteenth summit meeting of the heads of State of France and African countries, held at Ouagadougou from 4 to 6 December 1996, after reaffirming its support for the utilization of subregional structures for enhancing crisis-prevention and coordination under the auspices of the United Nations, shared the views expressed by the inter-agency meeting at Brazzaville with regard to the situation in Burundi:

"The heads of State, Government and delegation have taken note of the Declaration of the summit meeting of the heads of State and Government of the countries members of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, held on 2 and 3 December 1996 in Brazzaville, the Congo."

In addition, the Rome Declaration on Global Food Security, issued at the conclusion of the World Food Summit, held in Rome from 13 to 17 November 1996, affirms the following with regard to the blockade imposed against Burundi:

"Food should not be used as an instrument for political and economic pressure. We reaffirm the importance of international cooperation and solidarity as well as the necessity of refraining from unilateral measures, not in accordance with the international law and the Charter of the United Nations and that endanger food security."

Similarly, His Holiness Pope John-Paul II, noting how the suffering of Burundians had been increased by the sanctions, said in a General Audience at the Vatican on 25 September 1996 "... I hope that those sanctions, which weigh most heavily on the civilian population, will be lifted." Further to that appeal, the Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations sounded this warning on 20 November 1996: "If Burundi continues to be isolated and its people condemned to live in conditions of extreme need, it is possible that extremists of all sorts will seize the opportunity to plunge the country into chaos."

The Government of Burundi is pleased to note that the Pope and the heads of State and Government have grasped the full significance of the tragic and unbearable situation caused by the illegal, unjust and immoral blockade imposed on the Burundian people since July 1996 by the Arusha Summit; may they feel themselves involved and draw the appropriate practical conclusions.

Burundi has consistently maintained that the blockade is not an instrument of peace. Rather, it is an impediment to the efforts aimed at bringing relief and assistance to those who have suffered from three years of war, to protect and organize people of all ethnic groups from lethal violence, to restore peace and revitalize the democratic process through a dialogue and debate whose outlines have already been drawn, and to restore justice, chiefly by bringing to justice those responsible for the murder of President Ndadaye and acts of genocide against the Tutsi minority (see S/1996/682 and S/1996/910).

Furthermore, Burundi has consistently requested the international community - certain of whose members among Burundi's neighbours are manipulating Burundian refugees at the expense of ethnic integration and are providing a base for terrorist organizations - to support the efforts of Burundians, while acknowledging the responsibility of the latter and meeting their true expectations.

Accordingly, the Government of Burundi calls upon the competent organs of the United Nations, in the light of the foregoing, to take, as a matter of urgency, all necessary steps to implement the resolutions on Burundi produced by the summit meeting of heads of State and Government of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of this letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 43.

(Signed) Luc RUKINGAMA
Minister for Foreign Affairs
and Cooperation